UNDER THE BLOSSOM.

BY MARGARET HAYCRAFT, AUTHOR OF "LINDENHOLM," "AMARANTH'S GARDEN," ETC.

"'Miss Elwood, I presume?' said he." *p.* 179.

CHAPTER XI.

"THE DAILY ROUND."

THE day after she came home, Iris went to see her former employer, Miss Crockard, that she might lose no time in earning the money to repay Mrs. Harper and Stevens. It was a great disappointment to her that Miss Crockard had now satisfactorily filled her place, and Iris agreed with her it would not be right to send away one whose duties were faithfully performed. Poor Iris! it was hard to long for employment and yet see no prospect at present of procuring it. "Dear child, let us *pray* about it," said Mrs. Elwood, as the fruitless search went on from day to day. Iris had confided to her mother the reason why she left town so suddenly, and Mrs. Elwood had told her, with thankful tears in her eyes, that any struggle was better than consenting to marry for money or position.

Two things happened to cheer Iris amid her perplexity —a long, loving letter came to her from Leila Danyers, begging her, should she need help or advice, to write to her in confidence as a friend, a sister, and reminding her of One who understands our every need and sorrow, and whose tender succour is not far from any one of us. Iris felt she could not take her money-troubles, and those of her mother, to Leila; but the letter was a real comfort and help to her. And she was able at once to repay Stevens, for the railway officials found her purse in the subway of the station where her ticket was bought, and it was re-

stored to her, after she had described it to their satisfaction.

Nelly was married in the autumn-time: the leaves were fading, but everything was bright as spring for the young couple, and Nelly's only grief was in leaving her home, and the mother who seemed so unfitted to wrestle against adverse circumstances in the battle of life. Colin and Clover lamented loudly as they clung to their sister in farewell. Iris was almost jealous as they declared it would not be like home without Nelly, but she remembered her sister's patient care for the children, and loving readiness to help. Iris was more excitable than Nelly, and possessed less patience; still, she tried her hardest now to take up the daily tasks in such a spirit as would please Him whose servant she longed in her heart to be.

"Iris isn't the same," decided Colin; "she never says 'Don't bother me' now, when I want her to mend my jacket."

"And she doesn't get cross at my music lessons, and I play *hundreds* of wrong notes sometimes, when my fingers are cold," said Clover. "I think Jack Hyldon is very stupid, for he wanted Iris for a sweetheart when she wasn't half as nice as she is now; and when she's getting to be as kind as Nelly, he never comes to see her or writes to her. Never mind, perhaps she'll be like Cinderella and marry a prince, and then perhaps Jack will be sorry."

The money that repaid Mrs. Harper was earned by plain sewing, a task Iris disliked from her heart; but, seeing Mrs. Elwood had an order to supply some dainty frocks for the little daughter of Mrs. Burner, the banker's wife, Iris felt she must help her mother, and she stitched away busily, though she would far rather have been teaching or earning the money by mental work.

Iris hoped she would not have to carry that work home; she and Mrs. Burner had been class-mates, and Iris sorely felt the difference in their positions now. "Surely she will send for the things," she thought; but no messenger came, and, to spare her mother, she was obliged to go to Wykford House herself.

"Mistress is out," said the parlour-maid, who opened the door; "she will send Mrs. Elwood the money."

Iris felt her face glow, but she retreated with relief; she was thankful to be spared the ordeal of meeting her former schoolfellow.

Poor Iris! just as the door closed, she heard the sound of wheels, and she tried in vain to escape the notice of Mrs. Burner, returning from a drive. Her nervous dread was groundless; she had suspected pride and patronage where they did not exist.

"Iris dear," cried her former schoolfellow, "come back and have some tea; do stay and have a chat with me. Why, I heard of you as quite a queen of fashion; did not a Mrs. Danyers adopt you?"

"No," said Iris, "I paid Mrs. Danyers a long visit, but I am home again now, and helping mother to earn our living by sewing," she added, resolved that her rich acquaintance should know the truth.

"But you can do better than that, Iris, you were always head of our class; surely you can command good money as a teacher."

"I have tried," said Iris, "but I can hear of nothing just now."

"Then it was very naughty of you not to let me know you were on the look-out," said Mrs. Burner, "for we know so many people, and I can answer for your cleverness! You took prizes enough away from me. I think I know the very place for you, I will write to you about it. But, Iris dear, I must congratulate you on Mr. Hyldon's success, his book has made him quite famous. A lot of papers now pretend they discovered him in country obscurity; he is certainly one of those who have awoke to find themselves great. But his writings *are* beautiful! he will evidently be one of the best-read and most popular writers of the day. And then, Iris, his writings do *help* one so; my husband and I, like many others, have to thank him for many a beautiful thought. Do tell him, Iris, how we like his works; I am sure he will not let you teach much longer now."

"Oh," said Iris, rather faintly, "we do not see the papers, though Nelly wrote that he has become quite famous; but we are not engaged now, that is ended."

Mrs. Burner gave her a quick glance, and then, scarcely knowing how to reply, pressed upon her some tea and dainty cakes.

"I hope dear Mrs. Elwood did not mind my asking her to make Mabel's things," she said; "she has such wonderful taste, and she made them so prettily before. Let me settle with you at once, Iris dear, and as for a teaching engagement, I will try hard to find you one."

So the dreaded interview, like many an experience we have tried to avoid in fear, ended in comfort for Iris. She was able to pay Mrs. Harper, and she received a kindly letter in reply, but with no mention of "Jack" or his literary successes. How far away now seemed the lion of society from her who, according to his words many and many a time, had inspired his heart and brain! That was the one cloud upon the horizon for Iris; she tried to forget it, and she was filled with thankfulness indeed when Mrs. Burner wrote asking her to call on a lady in Wykford who needed a morning governess for her children. Happily, she obtained the situation, and was told she might commence lessons upon the morrow.

This morning engagement at Wykford helped very materially in making both ends meet for the little family; the fare by rail was only three-halfpence, and Iris walked the distance whenever she could. Her employer procured her also some music pupils, and she would have felt quite free from anxiety but for a rheumatic attack which befell Mrs. Elwood, and seemed to linger in her hands, thus rendering her unable to undertake orders for work. Iris and Clover had to manage the household duties and the sewing. It was hard for busy Mrs. Elwood to sit still and see her girls doing all, but she had learnt to know that even the *waiting-time* has its lessons of helpfulness, and Iris thought within her that, in its brightness and patience, "mother's" face was like a living sermon.

This time last year Iris was one of the gayest of the gay, richly clad, adorned with the jewellery she had felt it right to leave behind and that Mrs. Danyers had not included in the luggage sent after her, faring sumptuously, and living only for pleasure. But she was happier now, ministering to her mother and the children. No compliment had ever gladdened her as did Mrs. Elwood's heartfelt "What a comfort you are to me, child!" and the children's exclamation, when she made up for them a charming story one rainy afternoon, "It's just the same as having Nelly here. Oh, Iris, don't *you* ever go away and get married!"

Nelly sent home little gifts of garments for Clover and so forth, as far as she was able; but Dr. Weston had to help two maiden sisters, so their means were limited. Nelly's letters were a great cheer and comfort, and, as Mrs. Elwood often said, the mercies around them were countless; but it became daily more and more evident that they must

face the prospect of leaving Lime-tree Grange, for the rent had become beyond them. The landlord, Mr. Weald, had reduced it during the time of illness, when Iris was in London; but even now it was a serious item for them to meet, and after a long, anxious talk on the subject, and after taking the matter in prayer to the heavenly Counsellor, the mother and daughter decided they would advertise with a view to letting some of the rooms. If they could secure a lodger, they could still keep their home. If not, they must prepare to leave it. And so the notice was put into the paper, and they awaited the result in hope and suspense.

CHAPTER XII.

IN BLOSSOM-TIME.

"NO answer to our advertisement!" said Mrs. Elwood, as day after day passed by, and they received no application for apartments—only circulars from newspapers, suggesting further insertion of the advertisement. "Iris dear, it is our Father's will, and therefore we know it is sent in love and mercy—this necessity for us to seek another home. We cannot stay here; lodgings are cheap in Wykford, and, after all, you will be nearer your engagement, and Colin and Clover must go to the free school there. When my hands get well, I must make up for lost time at the dressmaking."

"Well, mother dear," said Iris, bravely, "there are many worse places than Wykford. I suppose we ought to give six months' notice, but as Mr. Weald was a friend of father's, I think he will excuse us sooner. Shall *I* write to him, mother, as your hands are painful, and tell him we find even the reduced rent beyond us now?"

"Yes, love, write to-day. I wish we could have stayed by letting apartments, but we shall always have the *memory* of this place, and of the happy days we have known here."

Mrs. Elwood's thoughts were full of her lost husband just then, and Iris could not help remembering the one who wooed and won her in that fair garden, now bright again in the loveliness of early summer. But he had reached to greatness, and *she* must tread alone the ways of hardship and anxiety—no, not alone, since she had learnt to look up to the Friend of the helpless, and to seek day by day the guidance and strength that none ever ask in vain. She refused to think what it would cost her to change that pleasant home for lodgings in the town. "It is harder for mother," she thought tenderly, and she got the letter off to Mr. Weald without troubling Mrs. Elwood about it again, while she tried to speak cheerfully of some apartments in Wykford that were handy for the recreation-ground there.

"I wonder if Mr. Weald is away from home or ill," said Mrs. Elwood one day, for her heart was full of the subject of the removal; "till we hear from him, we shall not know when we are to go out. I wonder if he will allow us to leave before the full notice has expired."

Iris promised to write again unless they heard by the end of that week. Next morning the expected letter arrived. Mr. Weald wrote but a few lines, saying he was in treaty as to selling the freehold of their house, and the purchaser would call at Lime-tree Grange that afternoon to see if some arrangement could be made whereby such old tenants could continue in possession, if they so desired.

"It must be some former patient of your father's," said Mrs. Elwood—"someone who feels under a debt to us for his sake. It is very kind indeed of the new owner, but it would not be fair to him for us to pay less than we do now—Mr. Weald has been most considerate already."

"Yes," said Iris, "we pay less than the place is worth, and I think we ought to leave now. But if this gentleman wants to help us for father's sake, perhaps he could get Colin a nomination for Wykford Grammar School—that would be such a grand thing, mother."

Iris had plenty of sewing to do now, as her mother's hands were not equal to the duties so tirelessly discharged of old. The children had persuaded Mrs. Elwood to ramble out with them wild-flower gathering, and Iris was busy with her needle in the old seat under the lime-tree, when she heard steps coming up the garden, and John Hyldon—looking older and more manly, but John Hyldon still undoubtedly—lifted his hat to her.

"Miss Elwood, I presume?" said he, with grave politeness. "I have called from Mr. Weald; may I ask if Mrs. Elwood is at home?"

Iris tried to speak several times, but the words came at length in a sort of hysterical gasp.

"Mother is out. We expected someone to call, but not till the Wykford train came in; mother said she would be back."

"I walked over," said he. "I will wait for Mrs. Elwood if I may," and he sat down beside her, as so often he had done in the past, beneath the overhanging blossom.

The girl's pride came to her aid; she lifted her eyes to his, and said, "Have you brought any message to us from Mr. Weald, or from the one who is to purchase this property?"

"Oh, I am buying it *myself*," said he; "things have prospered with me lately, and I have the opportunity of acquiring the freehold very reasonably. This place will belong to me from the Christmas quarter."

"*Oh!*" said Iris, faintly; "yes, I know you have been very successful. Well, Mr. Hyldon, then we will leave by Christmas, or sooner if we can. I am not quite sure how much notice we have to give."

"But why should you leave?" he asked, pulling a spray of the scented blossom. "I thought of doing the needful inside and outside repairs, and the garden looks pretty as ever; you will not find a nicer house in this neighbourhood."

"I know that," said Iris; "but the rent is beyond us, and to pay less than we do now would be unfair to the owner, so we have made up our minds to go."

"Well," said Hyldon, "business matters can wait. So you got your purse back after all, Miss Elwood? My sister was very glad to hear it had been found."

"Your sister was very, very kind to me," said Iris. "I shall always be grateful to her, and to Mr. Harper, too."

"Though he *is* a milkman?"

"Never mind what he is," she answered. "He is a good, true-hearted man, and I shall always feel thankful to them both for their kindness to me."

"Well, you need not be in a hurry," said he, as she prepared to put away her work; "I have some interesting news for you, unless you know it already. I have made the acquaintance, at a club for working lads in town, of your friend Miss Danyers, and she is going to be married."

"Leila! Why, there is nobody good enough for Leila." And then Iris paused, and flushed crimson, a sudden thought sending a sharp pain through her heart, as she added, "Mr. Hyldon, I congratulate you both; may you be very, very happy!"

"Thank you, Miss Elwood, for the blessings breathed upon us, but Miss Danyers's choice is quite otherwise; she is about to become Mrs. Clifford-Leicester."

"Oh!" cried Iris, "I *am* so glad!" and indeed her heart rejoiced in the knowledge that in gentle Leila Mr. Clifford-Leicester had found a consoler and a lifelong companion. "Mrs. Danyers will be glad, too," she added.

"Yes. Did you know she had been ill? Mutual friends tell me her daughter has been the tenderest of nurses, and the mother is much gentler and altogether kindlier since her recovery. She even sent you, through myself, conveyed by Miss Danyers, her love and best wishes; so if you offended her in any way, you see you are now forgiven. And, by the way, I have come across another friend of yours, your old servant Sophia; my sister manages a sort of agency for servants, and she heard of Sophia as having lived so long with your mother. Sophia wants to come and live with me when *I* get married."

"I—I must put the kettle on now," said Iris, faintly. "I repeat my congratulations—may you and yours have every blessing!"

"She has the sweetest face in all the world," he remarked, "but I wish she would forget the kettle, and look in this direction. Iris, do you think I cannot guess why you so suddenly deserted St. Alwys' Gardens? You could *not* marry for money after all, could you? Somehow I felt in my heart you were truer and nobler than the Iris you showed me that day at the Academy. God bless you, my darling, there shall be no good-bye between us henceforth, shall there, Iris? If you consigned the former ring to the Thames, I can afford to replace it by a better one now."

"None *can* be better than that," said Iris, brokenly; "and—I—Jack, I did not throw it away."

"Still, I will find a better one soon, my dearest—the plain gold one is best of all. Do you think I am going to let our mother and the children go away and struggle on alone? No, there is room here for all of us. And Mr. Weald sent word by me that he can get Colin on the foundation as a grammar-school boy; so cheer up, darling! things will brighten soon."

"I think they *have*, Jack," said Iris, with a rainbow face; "but the kettle——"

The kettle had to wait till there had been a long talk under the lime-tree, and still longer silence. "Jack" had so much to tell of his literary work. He was to be joint-editor now of an important magazine, and would have to be in London occasionally; but his love of the country was such that he preferred to fix his *home* amid the woods and dales, and his chief work would still be the authorship that could be carried on in his own quiet study.

Mrs. Elwood, coming home laden with flowers, felt exceedingly nervous at sight, as she supposed, of a stranger in the garden; but her heart gave a sigh of relief and thankfulness as John Hyldon came forward and told her that he and Iris could not spare her from Lime-tree Grange. "And she has *promised*, mother," said he, "that our wedding-bells shall ring, and Miss Elwood will be transformed into 'Mrs. Jack,' before we hear the music of the Christmas chimes!"

THE END.

SOME CHRISTMAS DAINTIES.

IF we, now-a-days, do not make such a store of good things for Christmas as our great-grandmothers used to do, we still prepare *some* extra dainties for the festive season, and a little chat concerning a few of them will not be out of place.

We will begin with a word about the filling for the mince-pies, because that is best made a week or two before it is wanted.

It saves much trouble to buy the currants ready cleaned of a good grocer; the raisins of course need stoning, and if there are children in the house they can be set to work at this department. Let us not forget a large cup of warm water to dip the "sticky" fingers in every few minutes. Half a pound of raisins, half a pound of beef suet, ten or twelve apples peeled and cored, a quarter of a pound, or half a pound, if liked, of candied peel; all these ingredients are to be chopped small, and some people would add a quarter of a pound of lean beef. Then we add half a pound of currants, one nutmeg grated, one teaspoonful of allspice, one teaspoonful of salt; mix the whole well together, and stow away our mince-meat for future use.

The pastry for mince-pies is of course best made just before it is wanted; in fact, pastry is never so delicious as within a few hours of baking.

Jam tartlets, lemon cheese-cakes, and "concealed cakes" are known to most people. The last are made each of two rounds of paste, about five or six inches across, laid one above the other before baking, with a layer of jam, or stewed apples, or currants, or mince-meat between. Before serving, they should be cut in three-cornered pieces, and a little fine sugar sifted over the top.

Pastry fingers, with jam between, make a nice change. For all dainties of this sort the paste should be rolled out very thin.

Now for that famous national dish, the plum pudding! It can, of course, be made as rich as you please, but as it is a pity people should make themselves ill at Christmas, my recipe shall not be of the very unwholesome order.

Six ounces of beef suet finely shred, a large teaspoonful of salt, three quarters of a pound of bread-crumbs, a quarter of a pound of flour, six ounces of raisins, six ounces of currants, one ounce of candied peel, a quarter of a nutmeg grated, two eggs, and a spoonful or two of milk will make a good pudding. It should be boiled five or six hours in a cloth, or if we prefer a mould for appearance sake, we must give it an hour longer.

A very nice sweet sauce can be made for this pudding by putting a quarter of a pound of lump sugar (nearly two dozen lumps), with the juice of a lemon and half a pint of water, in a jar in the oven, till boiling. And if we have any of the "lemon curd" used for cheesecakes, a teaspoonful or more will be a great improvement. Or should we have any syrup of stewed prunes, apples, or figs, that when warmed will make excellent sauce for plum pudding.

We shall want some cakes for Christmas. Here is a good recipe: A pound and three quarters of flour, a pound of butter or margarine, a pound of sugar, a pound of currants, a quarter of a pound of candied peel, two teaspoonfuls of baking powder (to be carefully mixed with the dry flour), two teaspoonfuls of salt, four eggs, and two tablespoonfuls of milk. This quantity will make three loaves of cake. They must not be cut on the day of baking, but set up on end against their tins for a few hours, to allow all the steam to escape.

F. P.

CHRISTMAS WITH THE BAIRNS.

THE coming of Christmas is always a significant fact with the mother. It is the children's happiest day in life. What sacrifices the mother makes who has but little money, to give her children some gifts, however trifling, that the day may be memorable and happy!

But the self-denial has a rich recompense. Who cannot share in the boundless delight of the little ones, even at the mention of that mythical personage, Santa Claus? Their young minds are full of intense expectation as to what "the good fairy" will so mysteriously bestow! With what charming artlessness are the tiny stockings hung out, all open-mouthed, ready to receive the welcome gifts! And what a delight it is to us elder folks to creep upstairs later on, and enter the room where the darlings lie, our hearts thrilling as we watch their gentle slumbers and remember our own days of childish trust and simplicity!

Early morning at last arrives, and oh, the mirthful noise and excited chatter when waking reveals to the little ones the fact that they have not been forgotten! Mere words fail to describe the looks of pleased astonishment with which each wonderful present is shown, and appeals of keen curiosity are made to us as to how such gifts—the very things that were longed for—have come so opportunely.

It is all a delightful phase of the Christmas season, the joy of the little ones in the tokens of parental love, and one which none of us would willingly let cease to be.

But there are many mothers who will wake up in the early grey of the Christmas morning, only to remember the echoes of the sound of little pattering feet that used to hurry over the nursery floor! No wonder that tears fall on the pillows of such mothers, whose loneliness is more oppressive on that day than any other.

"It is all I can do to get through Christmas nowadays," a sorrowing mother said. "We used to have such good times before our home was broken up and the children scattered. It is only by *forgetting myself*, and doing all I can to make other children happy, that I can get through the day at all."

Yes, it is hard to be separated from the children. No gathering together about the old fireside, only reading the letters that come from distant places, and vainly wishing we could hear the voices and look into the faces of the ones so dear to us. And if some of us mourn for little ones who have gone to the home beyond, may we not try to look up bravely, and thank the Saviour that the sweet story of "Suffer little children" has been handed down to sorrowing mothers? Safe with Jesus, for them there is fulness of joy for evermore.

We remember *all* our dear ones on Christmas Day, but especially those who already await us in "the better land." And how near is the Comforter at such times! "I will not leave you comfortless," is the sure promise. True it is that traces are left in the affections that are never worn out, and that death is not the sundering, but the consecration of love. Let us think of these absent ones as still with us, as bright, glorified angels of the household.

"'O Father! not My will, but Thine be done,'
So spake the Son.
Be this our charm, mellowing earth's ruder noise
Of griefs and joys—
That we may cling for ever to Thy breast
In perfect rest!"

A Christmas Eve Delight.

THE MASTER'S MESSAGES TO WOMEN.

BY MRS. CHARLOTTE SKINNER.

VI.—To the Woman Wishing to be Happy.

"O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."—Matt. xv. 28.

IN this world they are few who are truly happy. If while walking down some busy street you count the number of happy faces you meet, you will find the number to be a very low one. You will see wrinkled faces, scowling faces, anxious faces, fretful faces, long faces, faces with ghostly outlines, but few with the merry twinkle or calm serenity of happiness. True, to be happy should not be our highest aim, but we shall never reach the highest without it. And who would not like to be always happy? to leave for ever grey despondency for golden, buoyant hopefulness?

But the shadows seem so often to fall around us, and the sweet prayer, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy!" so long unanswered, that we strain our ears to catch our Master's message on this subject. He had left His native country, and, travelling fifty miles northwards, had reached the famed cities of Phœnicia, known throughout the world for their learning and commerce. Was it simply to check the tide of His popularity that He travelled so far? or was it because He knew a weary woman was there, who longed for His help, and that to her, a foreigner, He might impart a message which in the ages afterwards should not only rejoice the hearts of Greek-speaking women, but of women in every land?

A Woman in Trouble.—No uncommon sight. Instead of asking in our song, "Is there trouble anywhere?" we might well put the question, "Where is the place where trouble is not?" As hopeless as the search for a sinless Eden is the quest for an earthly paradise where trouble is not known; thorns will pierce the feet and the path be lost in a waste moorland before the journey has long begun. Every woman has her responsibilities, every woman her troubles; and far more than perhaps at first we thought, are our burdens equally meted out to us. "My life is made up of troubles," sighs one woman, "while some women have not any." That is a mistake; some have hidden troubles, some troubles come all at once, some are thinly spread over the entire period of life. The more we know of each other's real life the more we see our Father's loving impartiality towards us. But so often trouble is only the rain-cloud which brings out the sunlit colours of happiness that we would not, if we could, do without it. "I would not have been without this year of struggle for anything," said a tradeswoman, "though I have often not known how to meet my bills. But, oh, the joy of watching how wondrously the Lord can help!" We are taught to kiss the cross for the sake of the sweet flowers which bloom upon it.

This poor woman in the north country had a sick child—a sore burden. Doubtless in many a gorgeous temple in Tyre's palm groves she had offered up her sacrifices on behalf of her child, but Baal heard her not.

A Woman's Prayer.—Over the uplands from Galilee had come the news about the Great Teacher and Healer. And now He had come Himself, and could be seen walking in the marts, and standing on the shore of the great sea, watching the white-winged vessels that came from every clime. She would go to Him, and ask for His help! And she went. "Lord, help me," was her cry.

Happy thought! we have not to wait till His feet have travelled over the hills of Lebanon, but He is ever with us! Why, then, do we speak to Him so seldom?

A Woman's Perseverance.—Wishing for privacy and rest, the Master had retired into a house, but this woman soon found out where He was. Failing, however, to get an interview, she waited till He came out again; even then she failed to get near Him, but was she going to give up her attempt? *Never.* She followed the little company as fast as her tired feet would let her, crying out as she went. "Do be quiet, will you!" said some of the people to her; but she remained undaunted—undaunted even when the Lord Himself seemed unwilling to help her. Had not His gentle eyes seen her endeavours? were His words *really* unkind? Nay, He but wished to draw out all her powers, so that she might teach the world a lesson. The Lord loved her all the more for the persistence she manifested.

If I am longing to be happy, I must be often in prayer; and my prayer, like the wings of a bird, must bear me o'er many seeming obstacles.

A Woman's Humility.—Willing to be likened to a dog! Willing to speak of herself as a dog! If some poor degraded African woman had thus spoken, we should not so much marvel. But this woman, speaking the Greek language, knowing much of Greek culture, had been taught to ever think highly of herself. To her, humility had been an unknown virtue, but her great need and the Master's holy influence bent her lowly.

A petition to Parliament was once rejected because it did not contain the word "humble." Maybe many of our prayers are unanswered because of their lofty spirit. To be happy, I must first rid myself of all my pride and be willing to take the lowliest place. It is the Lord's will we should be happy, but He can never work His will in us while self-will is working at the same time.

A Woman's Argument.—From the Master's own words she saw there was a chance for her, and straightway she seized it. Trouble and perseverance had made her a logician. If it was not right to throw good bread to the dogs, there were always stray crumbs falling; and it was just a stray crumb she wanted. How many stray crumbs of happiness we daily pass by unheeded!

A Woman's Faith.—She was one of God's "great" women—great in faith. She felt sure He could cure her child—she felt sure He would. What are we great in? Some of us are great in industry, great in thrift; but how few have reached the greatness of this heathen woman! We all have faith of a certain kind, and all have the power to exercise faith; but few of us trust the Master *implicitly*. The consequence is we lead shadowed, sombre lives, with only here and there a gleam of sunshine-happiness. According to our faith, so is our happiness. The Master gives to us blank cheques—faith fills them in, and Heaven's bank honours them and pays us with the rich gold of happiness. But, mark you, the business is ever between us and Christ; His cheques are not of the world's bank.

Miss Small-faith always has for companion Miss Little-gladness. Great-faith ever brings in his company Much-happiness.

If we are sure the Master is caring for us, working all for our good, where is the loophole for the "miserables" to get in? He has promised to do all this, and when our faith falters we are seeming to make Him untrue. O cruel, cruel doubt! Full well we know He ever "*abideth* faithful."

Do you ask what *great* faith is? It is:

Firm. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

Attractive. Ever singing; there is no such thing as a faith that sighs.

Intelligent. Faith is not a blind power. I *trust* because I so much *know*.

Thorough. For *all* needs, great or small.

Holy. Pure, with no unworthy, selfish motive.

A WOMAN'S TRIUMPH.—She was a woman who ultimately got her own way, but then, you see, her way was such a good one. "I've got it! I've got it!" her exultant heart would sing.

And what a blessed home-coming that was! How the neighbours would rejoice with her! how they would say, "I, too, will go and ask the Master for a blessing!" Faith is ever triumphant; victory may tarry long, but is sure. Do you really wish the happy life? *Have faith.*

Do you wish to win others to the Master? *Show your steadfast faith.*

Let this be our prayer: *Dear Master, the world is full of sighs and shadows, and we long to be able, by the brightness of our own lives, to help others into the sunshine. We have listened to Thy message, and would answer make in lowly earnestness, "Lord, increase our faith."*

HOW TO AMUSE THE CHILDREN.

BY PHYLLIS BROWNE, AUTHOR OF "MOTHERS AND WIVES," ETC.

"WHAT can we do to-day, mamma?" Busy mothers often have this question asked them, and they do not always know what answer to make to it. Yet they ought not to leave it unanswered. A child with nothing to do is sure to be miserable, and almost sure to be naughty. We know that amongst grown-up people those are the happiest who have found congenial work and can do it. The same truth applies to children. Mothers are unreasonable who expect their little ones to be "good," and do nothing to make them cheerful.

But what *are* the children to do? harassed mothers may repeat. It is no easy business to keep little ones who are "feeling their life in every limb" satisfactorily busy. *Play* is the children's *work*, and if mothers would but believe it, play wisely directed furnishes an excellent opportunity for the development of the natural powers of the youngsters. Let us see if we cannot help mothers by suggesting one or two ways in which children may be kept busy and made happy at the same time.

Children always enjoy cutting out pictures. The objection to this kind of work is that scissors are dangerous tools for little ones to handle. Why not therefore invest in round-ended scissors, one pair for each child? When not in use, the scissors could be kept in the charge of the mother, and a rule should be made that they must be restored to her when done with. The tools being thus supplied, it should be the rule to preserve carefully picture cards, illustrated catalogues, etc., and to let the little ones cut them out from time to time. The older children might then paste the pictures into a scrap-book, and thus an endless source of interest would be provided.

When old coloured fashion plates are available, it should be remembered that they are great treasures. The figures which do not overlap, and have their arms free, can be pasted firmly upon thin cardboard, then cut out, and dressed in various styles with great care. Any scraps of material can be used for the purpose, and there is no occasion to make the back of the figure presentable, because when dressed a doubled piece of stiff cardboard will have to be fastened over the stitches, with a single flap of the sort used for photograph-stands to make the doll stand. It will be evident that the whole figure, with the exception of hands, feet, and head, will need to be draped, and the employment will furnish abundant scope for the exercise of ingenuity and fancy; and it will do much to make the children deft with their fingers. Play of this kind has almost always been enjoyed by children of both sexes who have been put to it. Children of wealthy parents rarely get the full pleasure and benefit out of the dolls in their possession because they obtain them ready dressed, whereas to dress them ought to be part of the fun associated with them. Not long ago a mother full of work and wishful to get it done, yet anxious also to keep her children happy, conceived the idea of giving them a box of clothes pegs to dress as dollies. The children were delighted with the notion. They gave full play to their imagination, and surrounded themselves with dolls of different names, with which they played all sorts of games.

Little children who can do the work always like threading beads, but the small size of the beads makes the business difficult for infants who are not far enough advanced to handle them. In cases of this sort, buttons make an excellent substitute for beads. China buttons of the kind used for workmen's shirts are very cheap; when bought by the gross or half gross, a large number can be obtained for a shilling, and will ensure endless amusement. The buttons can be made into shapes on the table, or used as play money for children pretending to keep a shop, or strung on twine to make necklaces or bracelets. Decidedly a box of buttons ought to be regarded as a desirable toy for children whose parents have not unlimited means at command.

Returning once more to our blunt-pointed scissors, it is to be noted that a Noah's Ark full of animals that will stand quite firmly on their base may be cut out of stiff brown paper, if only this paper is folded in halves, and placed so that the double side becomes the top of the animal. The plan is to draw the animal on the paper, as if its head, tail, and body were in one straight line. Then when cut out the parts which stand higher or lower can be bent upwards or downwards, the paper being folded under so as to make a sort of gusset which will cause them to lie flat. It is difficult without illustration to give realistic directions for doing this, but with a little ingenuity it can easily be managed, and the fact that the paper is double makes the animals stand. If children once gain the notion of using paper thus, they will supply themselves not

only with animals, but with miniature dolls' houses, chairs, tables, and who can say what else? The most costly toys that money can buy will not give as much pleasure as may be obtained from these simple home-made treasures.

A small blackboard standing on a tripod fitted with movable pegs, by means of which it can be raised or lowered at will, is a valuable addition to any nursery; and mothers who want their children to learn to amuse themselves and each other should make an effort to procure one. When once put into the way of using the board, a child will constantly turn to it, and gradually form a habit of putting his thoughts into shape in a truly marvellous way. If the child is naturally bright and intelligent, the probability is that, before the mother is aware of it, her child will have gained an acquaintance with the first rudiments of the arts of writing and spelling. Of course, it will be necessary to provide chalk for a blackboard, and if two or three chalks of different colours could be allowed, the interest would be greatly increased. It is a good plan to have a little box fitted to the easel, for the reception of the chalks.

We know that there are people who think happiness and enjoyment are known only to the wealthy, and such people would receive the suggestions here given with great scorn. But they are mistaken. A full purse in a lavish hand can fill the children's cupboard with costly toys, but it cannot make each toy interesting. Home-made toys never lack interest, because they are associated with endeavour and contrivance, while a superfluity of toys produces satiety and dissatisfaction. Only last Christmas a sweet little girl, the child of wealthy parents, had large numbers of toys sent to her by admiring friends. She accepted them calmly, and as parcel after parcel was opened before her, her only remark was, "What else am I going to have?" She would scarcely condescend to examine the toys in detail, and in the end the only one which attracted her was a simple affair that cost a few pence. Should not this incident teach us a lesson?

THE LITTLE ARM-CHAIR.

NOBODY sits in the little arm-chair;
It stands in a corner dim;
But a white-haired mother gazing there,
And yearningly thinking of him,
Sees through the dusk of the long ago
The bloom of her boy's sweet face,
As he rocks so merrily to and fro,
With a laugh that cheers the place.

Sometimes he holds a book in his hand,
Sometimes a pencil and slate,
And the lesson is hard to understand,
And the figures hard to mate;
But she sees the nod of his father's head,
So proud of his little son,
And she hears the word so often said,
"No fear for our little one."

They were wonderful days, the dear, sweet days,
When a child with sunny hair
Was hers to scold, to kiss, and to praise,
At her knee in the little chair.
She lost him back in the busy years,
When the great world caught the man,
And he strode away past hopes and fears,
To his place in the battle's van.

But now and then in a wistful dream,
Like a picture out of date,
She sees a head with a golden gleam
Bent over a pencil and slate;
And she lives again the happy day,
The day of her young life's spring,
When the small arm-chair stood just in the way,
The centre of everything.

MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

PRACTICAL PAPERS ON EVERYDAY NURSING.

BY E. M. WATERWORTH, AUTHOR OF "MOTHERS AT HOME," "ABOUT OUR FOOD," ETC.

XII.—FAREWELL WRINKLES.

THE longest lane has a turning at last, and the longest sermon comes to an end. Perhaps you are thinking it is time mine did, and yet, do you know, for the life of me, I can't exactly decide how to finish up. One of the cleverest American writers declares it is a great mistake to think that the *beginning* of any writing is difficult. He says it is the *ending* that bothers authors; and I am sure he is right, especially in writing a long series of this kind.

One feels inclined to linger about over the last words, so fearful that one may have forgotten something very important, so anxious to help those whom one knows so well, although one has never seen them. All I can say is, that if anything I have written needs further explaining, or you want to know something that I have not mentioned, if you will just send a letter to me through the Editor, I will do my best to help you. Only please to remember I am a busy mother like yourselves, and if I don't answer by return of post, do not imagine that I have forgotten you; the answer will come in time, and I won't keep you waiting longer than I can help, especially if it is an important matter.

There are one or two little things I have found out by experience which may prove of use to you. Don't put too much salt in an invalid's food; it is so easy to add it, and if the mouth is at all tender and dry, he seems to taste the salt more keenly. This must be remembered especially in making beef-tea; the stronger the essence, the less need of salt.

Cold food is better than hot when there is a tendency to sickness. In very obstinate cases, try a very small quantity of Brand's essence or meat jelly (see page 154 for recipe) alternately with a lump of ice, every hour. So far as I can make out from experience, both as nurse and patient, people are too impatient with sickness. They will try to feed the patient; yet, until his stomach has recovered itself, they are really only increasing the disease. The great thing is to allow the stomach time to recover itself and shake off its habit of sickness, and to do this you must, in very obstinate cases, give up

CHRISTMAS.

CHRISTMAS bells again are sending
Sweetest music through the air,
Grateful voices sweetly blending
Tell of gladness everywhere.
Thus mortals celebrate the morn
On which the King of kings was born.

Precious gift and kindly greeting
Pass each other on the way;
Friend with friend in social meeting
Spend the hours of Christmas Day—
The day which tells that now is given
To men the choicest gift of Heaven.

T. WATSON.

all attempts to *feed*—merely keep the patient alive. It is possible to live for forty-eight hours on a teaspoonful of milk mixed with a teaspoonful of water and given regularly every hour, from five or six o'clock in the morning till the patient settles down for the night, and also given during the night when he wakes up.

People are, as a rule, too much afraid of fasting. A day of it will be the best cure for diarrhœa or biliousness.

It is a mistake to argue with a sick person. You irritate him, and, when all is said and done, "a man convinced against his will, is of the same opinion still." Keep your patient's mind at rest. Invalids often have odd fancies, like children. You need not encourage them unless you like, but you certainly have no business to stamp on them.

For the same reason it is always wise not to tell the patient exactly what his medicine contains. Some particular drug may have disagreed with him once, and no amount of talk would probably make him believe it ever would be capable of doing anything else.

Finally, let us turn to the ending of one of the most beautiful books in the Bible. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter," says Solomon, after touching upon almost every subject under the sun that may concern a

man, from his coming into this world to the time when his weary spirit shall return to God who gave it. He was the wisest man, the most splendid king, yet when he wanted to put the whole gist of that sermon of his into a few words, he could find no better, no grander ending than "Fear God and keep His commandments," for, after all, that is the one and only duty of man.

Looking back on the words that I have said to you on the nursing of your sick folk, and longing to leave one word with you which you will never forget, I can find no better, no grander ending than "Do unto all men, especially those in sickness or sorrow, as ye would that they should do unto you."

MAINTAIN YOUR FRIENDSHIPS.

"DO not make such a mistake as I have," said an elderly woman to a younger friend, with much feeling. "When I was first married, my husband and I were so happy in each other that we were indifferent to outsiders. Then the children came, and we were still more devoted to our home and seldom went into society, neither troubling ourselves to make new friends nor to keep up with the old. As the children grew they always kept the house full of life, and we did not allow ourselves to think that a change must come some time. But now the children are all married and interested in homes of their own, and my husband's death leaves me entirely alone; I feel as if I hadn't a friend, and I know it is all my own fault. I do not deserve to have any one care for me now, when I have been so neglectful of everybody all these years. I want to warn all young people against following my example, and I should like to give them this motto for life: Keep your friendships in constant repair."

NURSING FOR GOD.

WHAT Pharaoh's daughter said to the mother of Moses, may be held to be said by God to every Christian parent—"Bring up this child for Me, and I will give thee thy wages." As each child is placed by God in the parental arms the charge is given—I constitute you My trustees for the rearing of this young life, this seedling of immortality which I might have placed under My angels in heaven, but which I have chosen to entrust to you, that your hands may work for him, your heart may cherish him, your head may think for him, your eye may watch him, and your faith may bear him on its wings to heaven!

"Bring up this child for Me, and I will pay thee thy wages." Suppose you had a king's child placed in your hands to be brought up for him, what a responsible yet honourable duty you would feel it! How eager you would be to please the royal parent, to bring the child up as he would wish; to have him taught and clothed and fed as a royal child should be, so that he should not disgrace his origin, but even in your humble hands resemble the son of a king! Is it not still more responsible and honourable to bring up children for the King of kings? How eager should every parent be to please Him who gives them to her charge; to consider all His wishes, follow all His rules, use all His medicines, and try to train them to the feelings, the habits, and the beauties in which the children of such a King ought to excel! At best, they will be but royal children in disguise, so far as this world is concerned. It is not an outward splendour that we are to effect for them. "The King's daughter is all glorious *within*." The marks of their royal parentage must be in the heart, the conscience, the life, the habits. Realise this, and you will be compelled to treat your children carefully and tenderly; you will have the feeling that a very precious charge has been committed to your hands, which you will be alarmed lest you destroy by unskilful handling; and should you do so, what will be your feeling when you surrender your charge, thus mutilated and ruined, to the Royal Father?

How miserably mistaken are parents often as to what is truly to be desired in the progress of their families! Excellent situations, lucrative business, wealthy marriages, conspicuous worldly position—of how little value are such things compared to victories gained over vice and greed and selfishness and ungodliness, and the formation of a character and habits suitable to a son of God! When the day comes for giving an account of their stewardship, of how little value will be the one, of what infinite importance the other!

Had Eli been more careful about the training of his sons, he would have been spared many a heart-ache. He might then have spent his last days in serenity, instead of going suddenly to his grave amid storms of trouble and disaster. The happiness of parents is in the hands of their children. However prosperous a father may be in business, his heart is filled with bitterness if his children turn out ill; but if they turn out well, his troubles are light in the balance compared with the comfort which he derives from them. A mother who is rich in the goodness and integrity, in the Christian stability and earnestness of her sons and daughters, has no cause for complaint. She is rich with a possession which no money can acquire—a happiness which only a mother-heart can feel. The "wages" that God will bestow upon the faithful mother are worth all the care, and love, and solicitude she may be called on to give to her precious charges.

A CHILD'S GRATITUDE.

SPEAKING of hospital children, a physician, in an account of his work among them, says: "One little fellow, whom I knew very well, had to have some dead bone removed from his arm. He got well, and, perhaps, thought I had taken a good deal of interest in him, although I was not conscious of showing him extra attention. The morning he was to leave he sent for me. When I reached his bed, I bent over him. 'Well, Willie,' I said, 'we shall all miss you when you are gone;' and afterwards, 'Did you want to see me specially?' The little fellow reached his hand up and laid it on my shoulder, as I bent over him, and whispered, 'My mamma will never hear the last about you.' Could any one express gratitude more beautifully?"

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HINTS ON HOME DRESSMAKING.

IN all probability, this month will bring us in contact with real winter weather, so that warm, extra clothing must be provided. For what is more miserable than to be chilly when out-of-doors? Yet some mothers do not seem to realise the necessity of warmer garments for their children at this season, judging from the purple hands and faces one sometimes meets on a cold day—not belonging only to those poor mites whose mothers cannot give them all the warm clothing they need, but sometimes to mothers who say, "There, run along; you'll be warm enough running about." But as a matter of fact, the young folks are not always running while in the open air, but often stand still, when they get terribly cold. Then the little ones in perambulators and mail-carts frequently suffer in cold weather from not being well wrapped up. Riding is different from walking; it does not excite circulation as the latter exercise does, consequently more clothing is necessary. In all our calculations for winter clothing for the children, let our first consideration be for lightness and warmth.

Fig. 45.

For ladies' jackets and capes we find that knop cloth and hop-sack cloth carry the palm, those of smoother surface not being so much in demand as they were last season. Some of our readers will be glad to hear this, for cloth of loose texture is much easier to make up than the stiff beaver cloth, which can scarcely be handled successfully by any one less experienced than a tailor.

Capes still hold their own, and are mostly of three-quarter length, trimmed about the shoulders with frills or short capes. The golf or circular cape continues very fashionable. There is an extra wide cloth manufactured specially for these capes. The right side is usually of some plain colour, as fawn, brown, or grey, while the wrong side is a coloured plaid, which does away with the necessity for lining. The edges of the cape can be turned under and stitched, or trimmed with braid. A shoulder cape and collar cut in one is all the trimming necessary, consequently this is one of the simplest and most easily made of outdoor wraps. A bell skirt of the same cloth can be made if desired, and will prove a very useful addition for severe weather.

Fig. 46.

Plush and sealette will be very much used this season for capes and jackets. It is expensive in the first place, but wears well. A quilted lining of satin or Italian cloth will be necessary.

Jackets are worn from 34 to 40 inches long, and have deep lapels—sometimes double lapels, one being of cloth and the other of silk or velvet to match the jacket trimmings. Most of them are tight fitting, but there is an effort being made to introduce loose jackets.

Fig. 45. Here we show a pretty blouse bodice suitable for an elder daughter or a young mother. Those of our readers who wish to smarten up their toilette for Christmas will find this a very useful pattern. The body of an old silk dress could be covered with a lace blouse cut after this shape, the gathers being secured with rows of twisted velvet or ribbon. Pongée or surah silk or delaine would make a stylish blouse, when bands of lace could be used as trimming across the back and front, under which is passed a narrow bright-coloured ribbon. A fitting lining is first made, and the stuff is gathered full over this, both at the neck and waist. The sleeve cuff is made to match, while the waist is finished with a pleated band. A frill can be added below the band six or eight inches deep, which will form a basque, if desired. The blouse can fasten either at the back or front.

Fig. 47.

Fig. 46. This little dress will be suitable for a girl from six to ten years of age, and might be made in cloth or serge. There is a V-shaped plastron in front, and the material is brought down from the shoulders in pleats, crossing over on the right side. This is met by the deep collar trimming, which fits into the neck at the back. The skirt is lined throughout with sateen, and trimmed with military braid or velvet. Full puff sleeves, which finish with a deep cuff, are used.

Fig. 47 depicts a little girl's dress, trimmed with velveteen. It is made on a fitting lining, and has a velvet yoke; the material being set on in gathers below, with a narrow heading. The waist can be drawn in with a waistband or sash, or left loose in blouse fashion. An epaulette edged with velvet is made to fall over the sleeve puff.

Fig. 48 shows a lady's dress made in a very simple style. The bodice is quite plain, and is trimmed with a frill cut deep enough to form an epaulette on the shoulder, and narrowing off at the waist both back and front. The skirt is bell-shaped, and has a narrow frill at the bottom set on with a heading, while the sleeve consists of a full puff and a tight-fitting cuff. A striped material was used for our model, but such materials are not easy to put together nicely, as a good deal of skill is required to make the stripes match, especially in the bodice seams.

Fig. 48.

Flat patterns can be supplied. Figs. 45, 46, 47, and 48, 6½d. each, post free. Address, "M. C. Pattern," 9, Paternoster Row, London, E.C.

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